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Learning to Faith

Michael Kuhn

Cedarville University, mbkuhn@cedarville.edu

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“Learning to Faith,” by Michael Kuhn

Instructor’s Note

In “Learning to Faith,” Michael Kuhn had to write a faith and learning paper that included both a narrative of his faith journey as well as an application of that faith perspective on his role as a college student. As a result, he traces his journey with God from before his salvation experience through to his current spiritual growth. He then transitions into the impact of his faith upon his worldview and his “perspective on knowledge, [his] definition of success, and [his] perception of student responsibilities,” fully exploring both requirements of the essay. How does Michael use specific images and language to develop his narrative? How does he demonstrate critical thought and avoid typical Christian clichés?

Writer’s Biography

Michael Kuhn is a freshman Mechanical Engineering major from West Virginia. Although he does not consider it his calling, he enjoys writing and also dabbles in poetry. When homework and studying are not occupying his time, he fills it with intramural sports, Calculus tutoring, refereeing soccer, working on the Supermileage team, hanging out with friends, playing Fifa ’13, and maybe catching up on sleep.

Learning to Faith

Faith. As simple as it is incomprehensible, faith influences our lives every day. Faith is foundational to how we build our worldviews, attempting to define life and explain it. Faith is also immensely powerful, whether it is the fiber forming bonds of deception and slavery to idols or the catalyst that motivates ordinary people to change the world. Jesus said, “. . . if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for

you” (Matthew 17:20). However, the awesome power and true value of faith is wholly dependent upon Whom this faith is placed in. As a Christian, my faith is in Christ. Since first believing in Him, I have grown in this faith, and this faith affects my perspective on knowledge, my definition of success, and my perception of student responsibilities.

I was born privileged. Not necessarily with regard to money, and not necessarily with extraordinary opportunity to be considered “privileged” by common world standards. But I was born to Christian parents. Their parents were Christians as well. At the very beginning of my existence, I am sure that many were already praying for my salvation. Not everyone is blessed with these same circumstances, and not everyone God intends for such, but as a young child I was brought to church. I grew up in church. However, church does not save sinners, and even as a little boy going to Sunday School I was, nevertheless, a sinner.

My parents emphasized salvation, and before long, I knew I needed to be saved. At the age of four, led by my dad, I accepted Jesus into my heart. I do not think that I completely understood the magnificence of God Eternal or the unfathomable depravity that is the Human Condition, but I knew that Jesus had forgiven my sins, including the ones I had not yet committed. I knew that Jesus would save me from Hell. And I knew that after I died, I would go to be with Him.

So my faith began. I didn’t feel a miraculous Spirit-filled wave illuminate my Winnie-the-Pooh decorated bedroom with other-worldly light. I didn’t feel a supernatural embrace, either. But I had the assurance of God, who cannot lie, and I had a personal relationship with Him.

While I grew up physically, I grew up spiritually as well. Church, Sunday School, AWANA, and the Christian atmosphere of my home were all sources of spiritual enrichment and Biblical knowledge. I had the privilege of Christian education for nine of thirteen years of my past schooling. I am exceedingly thankful for the influences of

those pastors, teachers, and mentors that have disciplined me through the years. Because of these people, I learned to have godly priorities and pure thoughts. I learned how important taming pride is, despite when others' compliments constantly puff it up. I learned God's word, and I learned how all pursuits other than God's glory are purposeless vanities.

However, I believe that God also uses life events and experiences to teach us lessons in faith better than any person can. Such is the case in my life. For example, unhealthy friendships and an overall tumultuous year in sixth grade God used to teach me to rely on Him. The despair I felt drove me into His arms, even if anger had been my first resort. God, through my circumstances, emphasized to me that my fulfillment is not in others' thoughts about me, what I am valued in their eyes, for in God's eyes I am worth enough for Jesus to die for me. Jesus defined my value by the price He paid to save me, that being his own life. This valuable lesson reached even beyond emotional value, though. Only four years later, I faced moving from Florida, leaving the school I had attended for eight years, leaving the house I had lived in for ten, to live in West Virginia, almost eight hundred miles away. I would leave behind my friends, my teachers, my soccer team, and my private school life to live in an area which many assured me would carry with it an unpleasant culture shock. Nevertheless, I knew that the opinions of others' do not produce my fulfillment, but solely God does. Therefore, I did not worry excessively about first impressions, new teachers, or public school fears, and God gave me the best junior and senior years of high school I could have desired. There are so many other ways God has moved in my life, even since I have arrived at Cedarville, but I suppose only God could accurately and comprehensively describe all that He has done for me.

Not only does my faith mold me as a person and shape my views of God, but it also outlines my worldview and is the structure of my perspective on knowledge, my definition of success, and my perception of student responsibilities. As a college student, the purpose of my

classes is to help me grow in knowledge. This knowledge, though, would lack application if I could not discern truth. As a Christian, I discern truth by and through the Scriptures. Jesus, the Word, called himself “the Truth” (John 14:6), and Psalm 119:160 teaches that “All your [God’s] words are true.” Tieg Laskowske, my Getting Started small group leader and senior Cedarville student, asserts, “Everything that the Christ-following student learns must be submitted to Scripture.” God is, by his nature, the truest Truth, and by his Word we know what is true.

However, God has also given us secondary tools by which to discern truth. Our senses and our abilities to reason additionally provide us means to discern what is true. I am majoring in mechanical engineering, a field closely related to science and the scientific method. Observing experiments, employing logic, and testing reality are methods that God designed humans to use in order to learn about the world He created. I discern truth first by God’s word, the supernatural, and second by the natural abilities given to all humans by their Creator.

My faith also transforms my perspective on acquiring knowledge. Proverbs 1:7 states, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” This verse reveals that beneficial learning is firmly rooted in God. Viewing the entirety of Scripture, it is evident that learning is an act of godly worship. My learning involves being a faithful steward of my abilities and earnestly desiring to employ the skills that God has given me for His glory. Additionally, my learning is an attempt to understand more of God’s creation and all that is His, which is everything.

While the desire to serve God is ample motivation for me to pursue knowledge, the world labels the eventual goal of obtaining knowledge as future success. A “good student” goes to college so that he or she can be successful in the real world. This idea of success pervades and saturates schooling at essentially every level. At colleges and other places of learning, everyone talks about success. Even the enthusiastic chant of my elementary school displays the permeating quality of this grasped-for ideal:

“S-U-C-C-E-S-S! That’s the way we spell success! Forest Ridge, we’re the best!” The spelling isn’t so hard, but the definition is much harder to come by. Typically, the teachers and school board committee members so forcefully promoting this idea fail to clearly define it. As displayed by modern culture, society bases its image of success on vain, passing entities—wealth, power, fame, happiness, etc. Even through history, the American public has so greatly emphasized its philosophy of success that it, the American Dream, is known as one of the distinguishing characteristics of our nation. However, true success does not consist of effectively obtaining some earthly ideal; rather, it consists of service. As a Christ-following student, the message of 1 Corinthians 10:31 describes success for me: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Contrary to the world’s illustration of success, my success is wholly based on Christ. Adhering to this verse opposes apathy, laziness, and self-centeredness while demanding the entirety of my effort for the only worthwhile cause — the glory of God. To truly pursue glorifying God as a student, I also must have an accurate perception of my student responsibilities.

At the commencement of this fall semester, we had a convocation ceremony. At this ceremony, the student body of Cedarville pledged to “love God and others, live with integrity, and pursue excellence in all we do.” Pursuing excellence in everything embodies true success as a learner, and living with integrity encompasses the responsibilities of a Christian student. Ultimately, my loyalty is not to my professors, the college, my future, or even my conscience, but I am accountable to God, the Holy Spirit working in me. Colossians 3:23 instructs, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Laskowske expounds, “With regards to integrity, people who want to be like Christ will shun evil forms of deceit, including academic deceit. Why? Because such deceit is contrary to God’s ways of life.” Ultimately, God desires his followers to be truthful and trustworthy — not performers of intellectual theft. If I do not live with integrity, it is inconsistent with who I proclaim myself to be, and it is disobedience to God.

My foundation is Christ. It is he who saved me, and I am helpless apart from Him. He defines my faith, my existence, my knowledge, my success, and my responsibilities. In the words of Laskowske, “Christ must always come first. Education and career are not ultimate things. Seeking God is.” Here at this place of higher learning, I pray that that would be my story: seeking, pursuing, and knowing God.

Works Cited

Holy Bible. *New International Version*, 1984.

Laskowske, Tieg. Personal Interview. 4 Sept. 2012.